

## Podcast Transcript: Promise of CES 2012 Better Lives for Seniors and Their Loved Ones

**Barry:** Welcome to Senior Care Corner. I'm Barry

**Kathy:** and I'm Kathy. Thanks for joining us today.

**Barry:** As always you'll find us online at SeniorCareCorner.com, where we offer solutions, tools, and information for families, caregivers, and others who care for and about senior adults. We have another great episode lined up for you today where we talk about the promises we saw in the Consumer Electronics Show; promises for better lives for seniors and their loved ones. But first, Kathy you've got some news items for us?

**Kathy:** I do. Our first news item: Covering gym fees might be money saver for Medicare. Private Medicare supplemental insurance plans that pay for gym membership for seniors is attracting healthier adults. Encouraging physical activity and wellness for senior adults will potentially save the Medicare program money.

Brown University researchers publishing their study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that of 22 Medicare advantage plans, that included fitness benefits, had reported 6% more seniors who reported their health to be excellent or very good.

Those who enrolled in these plans with activity benefits, reported activity limitations at a 10.4% lower rate; and those who reported difficulty walking was 8.1% lower than in those plans that did not offer gym membership. Researchers point out that having a healthier client reduces the risk of insurance carriers and thus there is a financial incentive to enroll more active seniors.

Medicare advantage plans usually cover services to seniors over 65 that Medicare doesn't; such as vision, hearing, dental, and some prescription drugs. Now we learn they will also cover gym fees. These plans are open to all seniors and the premiums are then adjusted based on medical conditions of the applicants.

Sicker seniors pay more than healthier ones. From 2002-2008, advantages plans that offer gym memberships jumped from 14 to 58. Researchers point out that joining a gym and staying physically active as we age, improves not only our physical health but our mental health as well.

This added insurance benefit is a positive incentive. If your seniors are enrolled in a Medicare advantage plan, encourage them to participate in every benefit available to them including physical fitness.

**Barry:** Well I guess too Kathy, there's a mental benefit in the socialization you get when you join and go to a gym as well.

**Kathy:** That's very true. Our next news item: Tips to stay independent, age happily. The fear of losing independence is very real to many seniors. Clarity and the EAR foundation found in a study published entitled "Aging in Place in America" that seniors feared moving into a nursing home and losing their independence more than they feared death.

They stated that 89% of the elderly individuals they studied want to remain independent in their homes. While 53% are concerned that they may not be able to stay at home.

They offer these suggestions to seniors and their caregivers to help maintain their independence.

1. Get moving! Regular exercise can improve chronic medical conditions and cognition. The American Heart Association recommends for older adults, 30 minutes of aerobic exercise daily, 5 days a week; weight training 2-3 times a week; and flexibility training 10 minutes a day.
2. Secure your senior's home with proper maintenance. Be sure it's safe to prevent falls.
3. Get from point A to point B. If your senior can't drive, look for programs that can help. Being able to go where they want will help seniors be independent.
4. Take control of medications. Be aware of when, where, and how often the medications are taken. And be sure your doctor sees this list on every visit. Proper management of medications will help your senior stay healthy and independent.

**Barry:** Great tips!

**Kathy:** Alright, our third news item: Herbal medicines for arthritis are not backed by evidence. A large number of seniors suffer from arthritis pain and look for options to relieve that pain.

A recent news release from the National Institute of Health, that reviewed products used by many, warns that there is little evidence to support the use of herbal medicines to relieve the symptoms of arthritis.

Osteoarthritis is a common condition that involves our joints and cartilage surrounding these joints. Areas affected include fingers, knees, and hips.

Herbal medicine such as ginger, devils claw, nettle, willow bark, turmeric, rose hip, Indian frankincense, and vegetable extracts such as avocado or soy bean oils; have been used widely to treat painful joints.

Traditional medicine is focused on the associated inflammation in the joints with treatments such as NSAIDs and Tylenol, which provides only temporary relief.

The authors state that despite the widespread use of herbal products, little is proven and few studies have been conducted.

There has been some evidence that vegetable extracts, rose hips, Indian frankincense may give some relief with few side effects. But caution that more study is needed. The use of other products for providing relief has been unconvincing.

The Journal as warns that some herbal medicines can interfere with other medications and prescription drugs and may act as blood thinners. No herbal medication has been licensed to treat osteoarthritis.

Some people get relief from glucosamine and chondroitin; but these products were not reviewed in this study.

Always discuss the use of herbal or dietary supplement with your doctor to be sure to prevent any harmful interactions.

Our final news item today: Grapes reduce age related vision loss.

A recent study investigated the effect of an antioxidant rich diet on vision for those prone to developing retinal damage with aging. Testing on mice with a grape enriched diet, a lutein enriched diet, or a normal diet; the grape enriched diet protected damage to the retina and prevented blindness.

Grapes were found to offer more protection than lutein. The researchers state that vision loss with aging is a result of an oxidative damage over time. A lifelong diet rich in antioxidants benefits eye health.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly. Adding grapes to our senior's diets is encouraged to improve eye health.

**Barry:** So is that, Kathy, grapes in any form? Whether you eat them or drink them?

**Kathy:** That's correct. They all have antioxidants.

**Barry:** Of course everything in moderation.

Well, thanks for those news items Kathy. Now we'll get into our feature segment.

As we've said before, and if you follow our website you know from our recent posts and podcasts we're just getting back from another insightful trip to the International Consumer Electronics show and we've got a lot to share with you. Don't worry, we aren't going share it all here or we would go on for hours. And I can promise you that Kathy is not going to let that happen!

**Kathy:** Some of us could go on for hours.

**Barry:** We will provide what we feel are the most important insights now and share some more in blog posts and podcasts over the next few weeks. In addition, we connected with a number of

companies offering products and services we feel would be of interest to many seniors and their family members and caregivers. We plan to bring you interviews with some of those in the coming months so you can hear in their own words what they have to offer and what they think it means.

**Kathy:** I'm looking forward to that.

**Barry:** First we want to talk about some overall impressions we got from CES and then go into some specific points we think you'll find of interest.

**Kathy:** We both saw more positives for seniors in the show than we have in past years, though still not as much focus on the needs of seniors as we would have liked. Some of the speakers we heard gave an excellent reason why that is, which we'll touch on in a couple minutes. Much of the positive outlook for seniors in the show is also positive for those of us who are family members and caregivers because it is reflected in advances and efforts in the area of digital healthcare. We are excited by what we saw and heard there and even more so on what is on the horizon.

**Barry:** Why aren't there more advances specifically meeting the needs of seniors? We looked for answers to that question and feel that it really seems to come down to the fact that technology developers just don't know what to do. There appears to be good recognition of seniors -- and those buying products for seniors -- as being consumers with money to spend on new products and services. Okay, maybe not the same buying power or interest in technology as in younger consumers, but the realization of the market that exists with seniors and aging boomers is growing. Just which products and services will be useful to today's senior and elderly populations, not to mention the boomers knocking on the door, is still a mystery to tech companies. A big part of that is guessing -- yes, guessing -- how the seniors of today and tomorrow will see their lives and thus what innovations will help them achieve those lives they envision.

It was suggested by speakers at Silvers Summit that technology developers need to talk more with seniors to find out what they think is needed. Now we'd hope that is going on already, and we know that some companies are doing so, but certainly talking more with customers and potential customers is an area where many companies should focus more effort, not just those working in the senior market. That is just one piece of the puzzle, at least in our opinion. Another group with valuable input with regard to the needs that could be met by new products is the family members of seniors and the elderly. Ours is a perspective that could help round out what companies hear from seniors from two points of view. First, family members do and will make a significant portion of the purchases for senior loved ones and are often the decision makers the sellers of technology products have to sway in order to make sales.

At least as important, though, is that the family members of seniors, especially those who are family caregivers, have a unique perspective from which to provide insight. Certainly there are

many of the future seniors who will benefit directly from the products that are developed and offered in the future. These family members see the needs of their senior and elderly loved ones while at the same time considering their own future needs. As current caregivers and future seniors they have a lot to offer developers. As caregivers, they see firsthand not only what seniors need in their lives but also how it can be introduced and implemented to be of most value. After all, caregivers are often the ones who would assist seniors with the implementation of new technology, if not implement it for them, and see how it will be used day to day. Caregivers and family members close to loved ones over time as they age may also have better ideas of what they will face themselves as they age and know what they want and don't want to make those aging years better.

The viewpoint of customers, though, should only be one set of information considered by technology developers -- and not always the most important one. Many people's vision -- people of all ages, not picking on seniors here -- of what can be is often limited by what they think is possible or practical. It is hard for many to imagine a life that is enabled by devices that don't exist or that they have not heard of being discussed. That's where visionaries have a role in developing the technologies of the future. They can see what could be, beyond what is, and map out a way to get there.

**Kathy:** One real treat we had at CES was hearing a Silvers Summit keynote by Martin Cooper, a visionary in his own right. You may not know the name, but certainly have seen the technology to which he contributed. Cooper is credited with having conceived the first portable cellular phone in 1973 and is considered to be the cell phone's father. It's true that knowing where you've been and learning from the mistakes of the past are valuable to achieving success in the future and Cooper had stories and advice that had everyone in attendance listening in awe. Maybe the best lesson he offered was one that fits so many parts of work and life -- that the best way to get people to think outside the box is avoid creating the box to begin with. If you want great ideas don't put constraints on peoples' thinking.

**Barry:** Another of the great speeches we heard during CES was a Digital Health Summit keynote by John Sculley, he's a former CEO of Apple and PepsiCo, is now involved with digital health. He is not an expert in technology or healthcare, and that's his own words, but great at helping companies map out strategies to find their way to success. Sculley pointed out that healthcare has missed out on the internet and PC movements, meaning they have not taken full advantage of those movements in the same way as have other industries, but had better not miss out on what the cloud and digital devices can do. It's so true, as an industry that is largely still paper-driven can do so much to enhance our health and the care we receive by using technology.

Sculley's view is that digital health, which we see as the future of healthcare, is being held back because it is outside the expertise of those companies in Silicon Valley. The tech companies are great at developing devices and applications, but only for those things they know. Fortunately, we are now seeing medical experts come together with technology experts to make it happen.

This is true on the academic side and the corporate side as well. On the academic side, we heard from Dr. Leslie Saxon, who is Chief of Cardiovascular medicine at the University of Southern California. Dr. Saxon is going from helping the limited number of patients possible one-on-one to forming the Center for Body Computing, which is working on ideas and technologies that will have a positive impact on the lives of many. On the corporate side, we are seeing big technology and communications companies like GE, Qualcomm, Intel, and Microsoft getting involved in the development of devices, not just on the health side but especially in the senior market more generally.

Its growing involvement of major companies in developing and marketing devices for seniors that we saw as one of the big positive developments at this year's CES over last year. Yes, many of the great ideas come from small companies and a number of those small companies are solid and growing. It seems to us, though, that a number of companies we have seen offer devices for seniors in the past are no longer around. When our senior loved ones or we as family members on their behalf are making significant investments in devices, both from a financially and a time standpoint, and especially when those devices are connected to services that our seniors need on an ongoing basis, it is important to know that the company making the devices and offering the services will be around for a while to provide support and so that we don't have to buy a new device to connect to another company's service next year.

**Kathy:** That's so true.

**Barry:** We just don't have the time or money. And it's not just direct involvement of the large companies that is beneficial, but in some cases financial involvement as well. The folks at Qualcomm, who is a big technology company, realize a lot of ideas come from small companies and individuals and have made available a large amount of money to help finance the work of smaller developers in the digital healthcare area.

Yes, the big picture is promising. That promise is starting to show itself in specific device and service offerings that were highlighted in conferences and exhibits at CES. We want to point out some of those now, with our focus in this podcast on the ideas represented by the products and not specific vendor offerings. Those we'll touch on over time to be able to go into enough detail to give you real insight. In addition, we saw a number of products and services that are not yet on the market but are expected to be available over the course of the year. For those we want to wait and give you more detail when you can really do something about it rather than tell you about something now and force you to wait months before you can actually purchase it.

**Kathy:** One technology that has developed significantly to provide benefits to both seniors and family members are the personal emergency response systems. They have evolved from "I've fallen and can't get up" to be SO much more. These systems, some on the market now and more coming later this year, show promise allowing the independence that is both desired and a source of apprehension for seniors and family members especially long distance caregivers.

Developers of personal response systems are adding many functions that make the systems more valuable, including GPS to know if our senior loved one did not arrive at the doctor's appointment as planned or even arrive at a community event, where their absence might not be missed. The devices can let us know if an elderly loved one who needs to be mobile has been immobile or if she has stayed in bed all day. We can learn if one with Alzheimer's has left the house or yard unexpectedly and help us locate him before he's harmed.

In addition to greater function for these devices that are vast improvements in style, recognizing that people of all ages can care about how they look and that people are more likely to wear and use a device that enhances – or at least does not detract from – their overall appearance.

**Barry:** Speaking of appearance, Kathy, we saw a number of devices and systems, both available and in development that monitors health and specific body readings as part of the clothing you wear or even are on the skin. These can be unobtrusive or even made to be attractive or fun for those of all ages if worn as part of a temporary tattoo. Some of those developments are amazing and show so much promise in both keeping an eye on health and freeing seniors and the rest of us from having to be in the hospital or even doctors' offices so much.

On another front, in-home display systems have made great strides as well in helping seniors and even the elderly live more independently than might be possible otherwise. Yes, you can still get reminders to take medication or get to that doctor's appointment from those systems but now there's so much more available. Companies are working with doctors – even a senior's own doctor – to develop care plans that are then communicated and reinforced via the in-home system and its tie to the company's service center. Everything from blood pressure to blood sugar and beyond can be measured by our senior loved ones in the privacy of home and the information shared with doctors, other caregivers and even family members, who can then respond if needed based on the care plan established for that senior.

**Kathy:** One thing I really like is that some systems are offering an educational component to help seniors and their loved ones better manage chronic diseases based on the vital statistics being monitored. We can actually take that blood pressure reading or blood sugar reading, and do something about it.

**Barry:** Yea, Kathy, I noticed you really enjoyed listening to that and talking to some of those folks; that's something that you've long said needs to be done. Now another key too many of the systems is follow up or notification of designated medical, emergency, family or other contacts based on what is noted in the tests – or even if the tests are not taken as planned and there has not been interaction between the senior at home and the system for a designated period of time. These systems offer a lot to seniors and their families along with the promise of even more that will be offered in the future.

Of course, many of us spend a good part of our day not at home but in our cars. Ford Motor Company, for one, is developing the "car that cares", including the ability to monitor major

health indicators in a manner that won't distract – or so it's planned – from our focus on the road. Between that and all the entertainment and computing systems for cars on display at CES, we will likely feel right at home in our cars.

Systems promoting health and safety are essential, of course, but not all that technology has to offer our senior loved ones in living at home – or even offer to us. Even with the improvements in funding for technology in those areas, the biggest investments continue to be in the areas of entertainment, comfort and convenience. Of course, we all want those in our lives, too. It is in those areas where we still don't see enough of the needs and opportunities for seniors being recognized, and where improvements are needed. Smart home systems will link temperature control, security, appliances and other home functions to provide control via dashboards on your home computer or even your smartphone. These systems are being targeted to younger, on the go consumers, showing how the thermostat can be changed when your schedules changes or letting the refrigerator can tell you when the milk is out of date and more needs to be purchases, now these are two of many examples of what these systems can do; most of which are being targeted to the needs of younger consumers. These same systems can help a distant family member make sure Mom's home is warm enough in the winter, or if Dad is not eating. There is still so much to be done with these systems as they start getting big in the market in months and years to come. We're gonna keep watching and keep you informed.

**Kathy:** One key to success for the new technologies, which we heard from pundits and tech companies alike, is that devices and systems need to be kept simple and easy to use, not just for seniors but all consumers of all ages. It will be interesting to see how well this is kept, given that technology is growing to encompass more of our lives.

**Barry:** Another key to technology discussed in many of the tracks at CES was the ability of different systems to communicate, or sync, with each other. This is important because we may want, either for our own homes or those of senior loved ones, appliances, health monitors, and entertainment equipment we can control from a single dashboard instead of needing one for each manufacturer whose device or equipment we own. Think of being the same as the remote controls you have now for your TVs, stereo, cable system, and what have you; and then think about adding one more remote control for all the different appliances you have that might be connected. And how much more enjoyable it would be if you could do it all from one control. Right now it looks like there are at least a couple of different tracks being followed in smart home systems and maybe a couple more being taken by home health systems, but even that narrows it down from the many different communications systems we would have otherwise. At some point, hopefully sooner rather than later, we will be able to use a common dashboard to control everything in our home, regardless of who makes the equipment we use.

**Kathy:** One of the things that we did see in production with the visionaries thinking how they can connect us all together, is they are making hubs that will connect the devices we currently own, so that will make it a lot easier for all of us.

**Barry:** Specific products and services aside, the major area of innovation and topic of discussion we heard, impacting the lives of not just our senior loved ones but all of us, is information – and how that information is created through the collection, gathering, storage, interpretation and use of data. Whether it is the data on our health created by monitors in our homes or by our doctors in their offices, data on our life created by the multitude of digital devices we already use – phones, entertainment devices, cars, and so much more, there is a tremendous amount of data being created and collected that can help us improve the lives of our families, from our children all the way through our senior loved ones, hey and let's not forget ourselves.

All the data being created today and the even greater amounts of data we'll see in the future drive two major issues both of which have to be addressed in the right way if we are to truly benefit from that data. The first, of course, is how to take all that data and turn it into information that is of value to us. Collecting our blood pressure and weight on a daily basis, for example, are of value to us only to the extent that we react to what we see in a way that improves our health. That information has to be tailored to us as individuals, not just treated as generalities we can find on the web today.

**Kathy:** And Barry, that's why I think it's so valuable to have that education piece to know what to do with the information that's being created and driven down to us.

**Barry:** Here you loud and clear Kathy. The other issue with the data being created is its security. We have to know that access is possible ONLY to those who should have it. We have long heard stories of paper health records or financial records being dumped improperly, computers stolen or websites hacked, all of which exposed sensitive information of individuals to the wrong eyes and sometimes harm to the people whose data was exposed. There is clearly recognition of that which we heard through those who produce the products we saw at CES. Still, we need to be watchful because the exuberance of innovation can get ahead of the cautions needed to protect our data and we all know that once something is out on the web it may be impossible to get it back.

Now the use of data is also key to the independence and care our senior loved ones will see from these innovations. We know that it can give great peace of mind to us as family members and to the seniors and elderly in our lives when we can be available to help them when we're needed. Companies offering these technology solutions need to recognize that data sharing is not one size fits all, though. Most we met do realize this. While many seniors will want family members having access to data, others will not. We like that some of the systems that collect health and activity data provide for selective access to that data as determined by the seniors on a menu basis. That lets family members see the data that indicates action is needed and gives comfort that no action is needed at other times while its shielding data their senior loved ones consider private.

To wrap up our impression of CES 2012, there is a lot of reason for excitement about what is available today to improve the health, safety, comfort and enjoyment of our senior loved ones – and us – with much more to come. How will we get where we want, especially in digital health, where the biggest gap exists? Well as John Scully told us, it will take brilliant visionaries surrounding themselves by great people. We are optimistic because we see that happening and look forward to what they have to offer us next year.

**Kathy:** Well thank you Barry that was a very insightful wrap up of the CES technology and how that will make better lives for seniors and their loved ones.

**Barry:** Now Kathy, you're going to bring us to the close of our episode with a quick tip?

**Kathy:** I am. Today's quick tip, as we look to the use of technology to improve the lives of our seniors, their health, safety, and socialization; we have a few tips to get you started.

1. Most important step, to thoughtfully analyze what your senior needs now and in the near future. What technology, devices, or systems will fill the gap to keep them safe and healthy?
2. Find the technology that fits your needs and can be easily used by both your senior and the caregivers.
3. Don't delay! The longer you wait the more at risk your senior will be of not being able to stay in the home that they desire.

**Barry:** Thanks Kathy, that's a great tip. Thank you folks for joining us today, and we hope that you'll come back often to see the information we have and to listen to our podcasts. Remember you can sign up on our website or like us on Facebook to make sure that you get all of our updates. In addition, we talked during the show about providing input to the tech developers and industry about what's needed for our senior loved ones and us as we age, we'd love to get your thoughts on that which we will certainly share with the people we met there. That's all for today's episode. Hope you'll join us next time and until then, we hope you have a great day.